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APR 11 2005

OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of :
Daniel T. Johnson et al :
Application No. 10/768,957 : **DECISION ON PETITION**
Filed: January 30, 2004 : **UNDER 37 CFR 1.78(a)(3)**
Attorney Docket No. 14602.01 :

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(3), filed February 11, 2005, to accept an unintentionally delayed claim under 35 U.S.C. § 120 for the benefit of priority to prior-filed nonprovisional Application No. 09/988,779, filed June 18, 2001, as set forth in the Application Data Sheet (ADS) filed concurrently with the instant petition.

The petition is **GRANTED**.

A petition for acceptance of a claim for late priority under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(3) is only applicable to those applications filed on or after November 29, 2000. Further, the petition is appropriate only after the expiration of the period specified in 37 CFR 1.78(a)(2)(ii). In addition, the petition under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(3) must be accompanied by:

- (1) the reference required by 35 U.S.C. § 120 and 37 CFR 1.78(a)(2)(i) of the prior-filed application, unless previously submitted;
- (2) the surcharge set forth in § 1.17(t); and
- (3) a statement that the entire delay between the date the claim was due under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(2)(ii) and the date the claim was filed was unintentional. The Commissioner may require additional information where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional.

The instant nonprovisional application was filed after November 29, 2000, and the claim herein for the benefit of priority to the above-noted, prior-filed nonprovisional application is submitted after expiration of the period specified in 37 CFR 1.78(a)(2)(ii). Therefore, this is a proper petition under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(3).

The petition complies with the requirements for a grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(3) in that (1) a reference to the above-noted, prior-filed nonprovisional application has been included in an ADS, as provided by 37 CFR 1.78(a)(2)(iii); (2) the surcharge fee required by 37 CFR 1.17(t) has been submitted; and (3) the petition contains an adequate statement of unintentional delay. Accordingly, having found that the instant petition for acceptance of an unintentionally delayed claim for the benefit of priority under 35 U.S.C. § 120 to the above-noted, prior-filed nonprovisional application satisfies the conditions of 37 CFR 1.78(a)(3), the petition is granted.

The granting of the petition to accept the delayed benefit claim to the prior-filed application under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(3) should not be construed as meaning that the instant application is entitled to the benefit of the prior-filed application. In order for the instant application to be entitled to the benefit of the prior-filed application, all other requirements under 35 U.S.C. § 120 and 37 CFR 1.78(a)(1) and (a)(2) must be met. Similarly, the fact that the corrected Filing Receipt accompanying this decision on petition includes the prior-filed application should not be construed as meaning that applicant is entitled to the claim for benefit of priority to the prior-filed application noted thereon. Accordingly, the examiner will, in due course, consider this benefit claim and determine whether the instant application is entitled to the benefit of the earlier filing date.

Petitioner is advised that the claim for priority appearing in the concurrently filed amendment to the specification is not acceptable as drafted since it improperly incorporates by reference the prior-filed application. Petitioner's attention is directed to Dart Industries v. Banner, 636 F.2d 684, 207 USPQ 273 (C.A.D.C. 1980), where the court drew a distinction between a permissible 35 U.S.C. § 120 statement and the impermissible introduction of new matter by way of incorporation by reference in a 35 U.S.C. § 120 statement. The court specifically stated:

Section 120 merely provides a mechanism whereby an application becomes entitled to benefit of the filing date of an earlier application disclosing the same subject matter. Common subject matter must be disclosed, in both applications, either specifically or by an express incorporation-by-reference of prior disclosed subject matter. Nothing in section 120 itself operates to carry forward any disclosure from an earlier application. In re deSeversky, supra at 674, 177 USPQ at 146-147. Section 120 contains no magical disclosure-augmenting powers able to pierce new matter barriers. It cannot, therefore, "limit" the absolute and express prohibition against new matter contained in section 251.

In order for the incorporation by reference statement to be effective as a proper safeguard against the omission of a portion of a prior application, the incorporation by reference statement must be included in the specification-as-filed, or in an amendment specifically referred to in an oath or declaration executing the application. See In re deSeversky, supra. Note also MPEP 201.06(c).

A corrected Filing Receipt, which includes the priority claim to the prior-filed nonprovisional application, accompanies this decision on petition.

Any inquiries concerning this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3218. All other inquiries concerning either the examination procedures or status of the application should be directed to the Technology Center.

This application is being forwarded to Technology Center Art Unit 2857 for appropriate action and consideration of applicants' entitlement to claim benefit of priority under 35 U.S.C. § 120 to prior-filed nonprovisional Application No. 09/883,779 appearing in the ADS filed February 11, 2005.



Frances Hicks
Petitions Examiner
Office of Petitions
Office of the Deputy Commissioner
for Patent Examination Policy

ATTACHMENT: Corrected Filing Receipt